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# **The Amerikanisti**

## **Soviet Union Sets Up High-Level Institute To Study U.S. Affairs**

### **Specialized Scholars Probe Politics and Economics To Inform Soviet Leaders**

### **Rating Nixon's Leadership**

By RAY VICKER

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

MOSCOW — The "Amerikanisti" are drawing some conclusions about the United States:

—President Nixon has yet to prove himself as a leader. He tends to let events shape his actions rather than shaping events with his actions.

—The U.S. is overextended in the international sphere, financially as well as militarily, so the dollar inevitably will come under strain again, producing a swing toward gold.

—U.S.-Soviet trade has enormous scope for expansion, but this isn't a propitious time for that development.

These are some of the things being told influential Russians by a prestigious new Soviet agency, the Institute of the United States of America. Created by a Kremlin mandate, this arm of the Soviet Academy of Sciences is examining American economic, political and social matters for the edification of political scientists, economists and government leaders in the USSR.

The institute, housed in an 18th century mansion in central Moscow, is producing a new kind of Soviet scholar, the Americanologists, or Amerikanisti. "Our country and the United States are the two most powerful countries in the world. We should know each other better," says Yuri I. Bobrakov, an earnest former diplomat in the Soviet embassy in Washington who now heads the institute's economic section.

#### **Hopeful Development**

U.S. diplomats have fretted in the past that Soviet citizens—and policy makers—received a distorted picture of the U.S. They hope the institute will contribute to better understanding that could improve relations between the two big powers.

"The institute seems to be trying to present a more accurate picture of America than people here have been getting," says one U.S. diplomat. "And it doesn't seem to be a spy outfit either."

The Western counterpart of Americanology—Kremlinology—is an advanced scholarly specialty. The easing of East European travel barriers has contributed to accumulating information about the Soviet Union, and in the West a small army of experts on Communism toils at monitor radio stations, special institutions, universities and government agencies.

The mansion headquartering Moscow's Amerikanisti once belonged to the Prince Volkonsky family, familiar to readers of Tolstoy's "War and Peace." The high-ceilinged rooms, decorated with baroque plaster work, now house about 150 persons, of whom some 80 are technical and research specialists.

#### **English Spoken Here**

The director, Georgi Arbatov, is a suave, smartly dressed official who was well up the ladder in the Communist Party's Central Committee apparatus when the institute was launched two years ago. Like all the key people at the institute, he speaks fluent English.

The institute's scholars now are studying such topics as the U.S. balance of payments problem, the effects of burgeoning U.S. investments overseas and American management and industrial techniques. But much energy still is devoted to creating a top-drawer staff from specialists who have distinguished themselves in American studies at various government agencies, at the Soviet embassy in Washington and elsewhere.

This January the institute launched its monthly magazine "USA." The first issue had a press run of 22,000. This was increased to 25,000 for the second issue, and circulation now is being expanded to 40,000. Articles have included an installment of Theodore H. White's "The Making of the President: 1968"; a discussion of U.S. foreign policy, a report on a recent U.S. Congressional session and an interview with Cyrus Eaton, the American industrialist (who predicted an early end to the Vietnam war and a subsequent improvement in U.S.-Soviet relations).

#### **Love and Hate**

"Interest in America is very strong in the Soviet Union," says one official at the institute. But foreign observers say that interest has a love-hate aspect. Soviet scholars, fascinated by American efficiency and productive capacity, don't like to acknowledge that those qualities are fruits of the free enterprise system.

The institute is expanding its subscription list of American publications. A researcher strides through a creaky-floored hall with a copy of the Washington Post under one arm. In an office a bespectacled scholar peers at the Congressional Record. Racks in the library hold copies of The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, The American City, the Federal Reserve Bulletin and other journals.

However, the library still is skimpy by academic standards. "We are just starting, and we haven't had time to build up our documentation," explains a librarian. One institute aide offers an aside: "We don't have 'Playboy.'" (That magazine sells for \$10 to \$15 on the black market in Moscow.)

The American Embassy here has been providing the institute some books and documents under a reciprocal arrangement whereby the embassy gets certain Russian publications in return. The institute, however, doesn't have to rely on such deals; its budget, though undisclosed, is believed to be large.

There is an unlimited travel budget for sending researchers on study trips to the U.S. Institute aides say the only hindrance to such travel is the slowness of the U.S. embassy here to grant visas (the embassy says visas are processed rapidly).

Half a dozen researchers from the institute

are currently in the U.S. on trips that may last as long as a semester at a university. Yuri Rigin, a senior specialist in urban affairs at the institute, is in the U.S. on a six-month trip taking him to New York University, the University of Illinois and Harvard University, among other places.

Michael Zakhmatov, a specialist in East-West trade and U.S. foreign policy, says he is gathering his notes together for a book based on his recent three-year hitch in Washington as the Soviet embassy's commercial attache. And he is planning more trips to the U.S. "First-hand investigation is good for people in our line of work," says Mr. Zakhmatov.

International conferences of economists, urban planners, political scientists and other specialists are becoming targets for institute researchers. Director Arbatov and two aides showed up at last fall's annual meeting of the Institute for Strategic Studies at the Hague, attending as observers. "The presence of the Russians inhibited some of the discussions," says one Western Kremlinologist, "But Mr. Arbatov made a very favorable impression as a scholar on many of us."

The institute hopes eventually to attract American scholars and technicians to seminars in the Soviet Union for exchange of ideas. It now is establishing contacts with American universities.

Nearly every visiting American of consequence is invited to the institute to make an address or hold discussions. Former Vice President Hubert Humphrey, Senators Birch Bayh of Indiana and Eugene McCarthy of Minnesota and Charles B. Thornton, chairman of Litton Industries, have been among the visitors so far, the institute reports.

Despite the institute's evident attempt to be dispassionate and scholarly, observers here find that Communist ideology creeps into its deliberations.

For instance, its opinion is that race problems in the U.S. will continue as long as the capitalist system endures. Institute scholars say that racial friction is aggravated by the contradictions found in a capitalistic society, with the capitalists exploiting the blacks.

And, says the institute, the huge American investments overseas reflect a form of imperialism that results in the exploitation of foreign nations. These nations must be alerted to the dangers of U.S. capital, the institute avers.

There is disagreement here with the oft-stated "convergence theory," which argues that technological societies tend to evolve in the same direction regardless of their ideologies. "Nonsense," says Mr. Bobrakov. "This theory places economic, social and political factors at the same plane. Our societies will converge only when America rises to the highest political level and becomes Communist."